

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The delegation was comprised of three bishops: Bishop John Ricard, Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee, president and chairman of the board of Catholic Relief Services, and member of the Committee on International Policy; Bishop Nicolas DiMarzio, Bishop of Camden, New Jersey and chairman of the Committee on Refugees and Migration; Bishop Edward Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles, Louisiana and member of the Committee on International Policy; Staff from Catholic Relief Services and the United States Catholic Conference committees on Migration and Refugees and International Policy.

The delegation went to: Khartoum, and its outlying areas; Rumbeck; Narus; Nimule; Yambio; and Kauda in the Nuba Mountains.

During the visit, the delegation met with: Northern and Southern leaders of the Catholic church and the New Sudan Council of Churches; Government ministers in Khartoum including the first vice-president, and the former Minister of State, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the State Minister of Engineering, and the Minister of Religious Affairs; SPLM/A officials, including governors, military commanders and other senior officials. The delegation met with other civil society groups in both North and South.

The Bishops raised issues of: peace; religious freedom; human rights; plight of displaced persons and refugees; slavery and abduction; bombing and terrorization of civilian populations.

It is important for this delegation to state that we are not specialists of Sudanese culture, politics, and other aspects of social life. We speak from the perspective of a Church deeply concerned with the plight of all Sudanese, those living in the North, South, the contested areas, and those forced to flee their country and seek asylum in neighboring states or elsewhere.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Conflict and persecution in Sudan are a direct result of a systematic campaign of Islamization and Arabization by those who hold political and economic power in Khartoum.

2. Religious persecution, the systematic denial of basic religious freedom, and a program of Islamization continue to characterize the approach of the Government in Khartoum towards those who do not profess a particular version of Islam.

3. Cultural persecution, the systematic undermining of the dignity of non-Arab Sudanese citizens, and the relegation of people to a status of inferiority and subservience continue to shape social institutions and fundamental attitudes of people living in northern Sudan, for which government is responsible.

4. The bombing of civilian targets, the systematic use of Antonov bombers to terrorize populations in contested areas, and other tactics employed to drive people from oil-rich regions are part of the military strategy of the government in Khartoum.

For example: There was a bombing April 16 of Kauda that narrowly missed hitting the plane carrying Bishop Macram Max, Bishop of Diocese of El-Obeid.

And then only yesterday, April 23, Antonov bombers inflicted serious damage on a Catholic school in Narus.

5. Oil exploration, development and sales contribute to an expansion of the war, deepen the plight of the peoples of southern Sudan and other contested areas, harden the resolve of the government in Khartoum to seek a military solution to the conflict, and further widen the gap between the government and those contesting its practices and legitimacy,

6. The government in Khartoum must be called to accountability for its promotion, directly or indirectly, of the intolerable practice of slavery and other gross violations of human rights, and the abduction of Southern children living in and around Khartoum and their forced induction into Koranic schools. The SPLM/A must also cease the practice of the abduction and conscription of minors and other practices that violate human rights.

7. Divisions among the various ethnic groups in the South, coupled with the lack of political support by the leadership of the SPLM/A for various initiatives seeking to reconcile and unite people, compromise the peace process, further destabilize a fragile social infrastructure and undermine advances in development in the region.

8. Internally displaced persons living in the North and the South live in desperate conditions with little hope for immediate improvement; Sudanese refugees in neighboring countries languish in refugee camps, with few prospects for their future. Fatigue on the part of the international community is due to the protracted nature of the conflict and the inability to improve prospects for a better life for the displaced. We are encouraged by the special attention that dedicated groups in the U.S. and elsewhere have been able to bring to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, and the increased attention being given by the U.S. Congress and Media.

9. Increasing threats of famine in western Sudan, northern Bahr el Ghazal and elsewhere, further complicated by the political manipulation of humanitarian access by the Government in Khartoum and the expropriation of large amounts of humanitarian assistance by the SPLA, exacerbate human suffering and contribute to the loss of innocent lives.

10. There is urgent need for investment in development in southern Sudan, particularly for education and technical training, and for the formation of individuals and communities in the basic principles of responsible governance and civil administration.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The war in Sudan must be brought to an immediate and just end. The full and active engagement of the U.S. government could provide the necessary impetus to all parties to the conflict to negotiate an immediate and verifiable cessation of hostilities, monitored by the United Nations or another international body. It is particularly crucial that there be an immediate end to the bombing of civilian targets and a halt to the expulsion of civilian populations from their homelands.

2. We support the Sudanese Bishops and others in calling for the U.S. to play a central role in leading a new, multilateral effort involving the member states of IGAD, those of the IGAD Partner's Forum, and the international community to push all parties to the conflict to a negotiated peace, based on the Declaration of Principles to which the two main parties are signatories.

3. We support the call for the President of the United States should name a high-level special envoy to Sudan with a clear mandate and direct access to the President and the Secretary of State.

4. As we give attention to the terrible situation in the South, the U.S. government and the international community must also address serious human rights violations in the North, particularly: Religious persecution and denial of religious freedom; cultural persecution; economic exclusion; denial of the right of free expression, free association and other fundamental rights; the plight of more than 2 million internally displaced in the North.

5. The U.S. government and the international community should exert pressure upon corporations and governments involved in the exploration, extraction, production and sale of Sudanese oil to take steps to ensure that their activities do not contribute to the escalation of the war, the deepening of human suffering, the continued displacement of peoples from their homelands and ways of life, and urge the oil industry to take an active role in helping to promote a just and lasting peace.

6. The United States and the international community should increase humanitarian relief, specifically to internally displaced persons, press for greater access to humanitarian relief in contested areas, based on the Beneficiaries Protocol signed by the two main parties to the conflict, and increase development assistance to the South for education, health and capacity building of civil institutions.

7. The U.S. government and the international community must press the Government in Khartoum to bring the practice of slavery to an immediate end and secure the release and return of all slaves to their families and communities. The international community also must use its influence to press all parties to the conflict to end the abduction of minors and their induction into Koranic schools in the North, or into military service in both the North and South and provide for their immediate and safe return to their families and communities.

HONORING JOY KURLAND

HON. STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 24, 2001

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a woman who has dedicated her life to fostering understanding and mutual respect among various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in an effort to promote our common humanity. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor my good friend, Joy Kurland of Parsippany, New Jersey, this year's winner of the Anti-Defamation League's Distinguished Community Service Award.

As the Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the UJA Federation of Bergen County and North Hudson since 1990, Joy has played a vital role in strengthening Judaism throughout New Jersey. Much of her work has been to foster understanding and respect among the many racial, ethnic and religious groups that form the tapestry of our community.

I was privileged to work with Joy both as a member of the Jewish Community Relations Council as well as the Interfaith Brotherhood Sisterhood Committee. It was truly a pleasure to work with someone who is as dedicated as Joy, and I was always impressed by her hard work, common sense, dedication, and professionalism.

Joy is also a forward-thinking person who never loses sight of the future: our young people. She is always working with young people and encouraging them to increase their participation in the Jewish community. She has supervised the campus youth programs for Jewish Student Services of MetroWest at Montclair State University, Drew University and Fairleigh Dickinson University.

People who give so much of themselves, as Joy Kurland, do not do so for the recognition. However, she certainly deserves to receive it.